

Opinions

Looking beyond the System for Sustainable Change Within

Many successful efforts to improve the quality of health and healthcare in the context of system reform are based on distinct theoretical frameworks. These inform the planning, processes and outcomes of organizational or cultural change. Research and theory development in health services support the advancement of many of these progressive evaluative lenses, contributing to the understanding of notable paradigms such as the Behavioral Model of Utilization (Andersen 1995). Since its presentation in 1968 (Phillips et al. 1998), this model has continued to be one of the most frequently cited in assessing factors contributing to healthcare utilization. It has clearly established personal health beliefs as an essential consideration in determining healthcare consumption patterns.

While personally held health beliefs are but one component of the overall model, Andersen (1995) highlights this element as one of the most powerful determinants, holding the highest likelihood for positive change to personal healthcare consumption. “Look beyond” is our argument for the application of social theory to healthcare in order to understand the nature and timing of the development of health beliefs, and the potential for these beliefs to change in time to support a sustainable health system. Understanding the formation of health beliefs and recognizing the social phenomena that contribute to their development will allow policy makers and acute care oligopolies to attend to those avenues that not only improve patient satisfaction but initiate creative thought toward developing educational strategies that alter deep-seated health system behaviours.

Health beliefs have been defined as “attitudes, values, and knowledge that people have about health and health services that might influence their subsequent perceptions of need and use of health services” (Andersen 1995: 2). John Ramage (2006) advanced a rhetorical theory that examines identity construction and emphasizes the important influence of social phenomena in determining individuals’ beliefs, values and attitudes with respect to social institutions such as healthcare. This aspect of identity is referred to as the ready-made and is categorized according to three overarching components of typical contemporary lifestyle: the workplace, the ubiquitous consumer market and the cultural messages received in daily life. The application of the ready-made framework to health and healthcare consumption provides a unique insight into the interpretation of implicit social messages and the impact they can have on health beliefs, current approaches to consumption and sustainability of the current health system.

Ramage’s (2006) workplace ready-mades refer to the attitudes and values surrounding the culture of work that have developed throughout modern history, impacting the identity

of individuals via important social factors such as class stratification and perceptions of employment. This is important for healthcare on two levels. Firstly, those within healthcare have to consider the socialization of the health professional workforce, recognizing that the values they maintain are influenced by the standardized historical values of the educational system in which they were trained. Secondly, healthcare institutions need consider the impact that ingrained traditions of employment have on patients’ lives and their influence on patient perceptions of care.

We must take into account the traditions and implicit cultural messages that contribute to each set of cultural and consumer ready-mades; recognition gets us on the road to change.

Consumer ready-mades reflect the presence of consumer attitudes in contemporary life, indicating that individuals generally take on an individualistic though somewhat informed approach to their endeavours. Experience and expectations encouraged by the system itself, access to the Internet and profit-based advertising all contribute to the views developed by our personal consumer psyche.

Implicit cultural messages, the manifestation of cultural ready-mades, are interpreted in the context of their impact on consumer ready-mades (Ramage 2006). Thus, the influence of negative media-based health messages on individuals’ health beliefs, as substantiated by models such as Cultivation Theory, has to be combated in order to provide excellent, client-centred healthcare (Brodie et al. 2001). Popular media portray a dependency of patients upon high-functioning acute healthcare systems, which perpetuates the dominating preoccupation with acute healthcare and reliance on reactive medical services.

The combination of acute care and dependent-patient portrayals has a significant impact on both the cultural and consumer ready-mades that inform population health beliefs, leading to an unacceptable lack of attention (or policy) to preventive health behaviours, and to unrealistic and unsustainable expectations of healthcare institutions.

The ready-made framework raises a critical awareness that is thankfully supported with promising solutions. Historic biomedical-dominated value structures of health professionals can be better informed to connect with the real and perceived health beliefs of patients. We must take into account the traditions and implicit cultural messages that contribute to each set of cultural and consumer ready-mades; recognition gets us on the road to change. Health policy makers need to support the development of health promotion programs to actively facilitate positive ready-mades. These are ready-mades that contribute to

a sustainable healthcare system by altering public perceptions of healthcare institutions and improving beliefs about the value of healthy lifestyles. **HQ**

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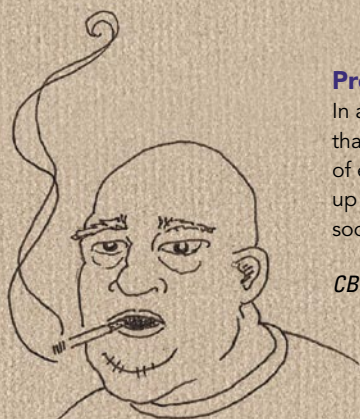
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Points of Interest



Preventing Obesity And Smoking Can Save Lives, But It Doesn't Save Money

In a paper published in the *Public Library of Science Medicine* journal, Dutch researchers found that the health costs of thin and healthy people in adulthood are more expensive than those of either fat people or smokers. They concluded that from age 20 to 56, obese people racked up the most expensive health costs. But because both the smokers and the obese people died sooner than the healthy group, it cost less to treat them in the long run.

CBC News February 4, 2008 <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/health/080204/x020436A.html>

E-noses Could Make Diseases Something to Sniff At

Engineers are developing electronic versions of the human nose that will allow doctors, ever in search of less-invasive techniques, to tap into what the nose knows about the human body. "The sense of smell has been used as a medical diagnostic tool for thousands of years," says Bill Hanson, an anesthesiologist and critical care specialist at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, who has studied whether odour can be used to diagnose an ailment. "Both diseases and bacteria that cause diseases have individual and unique odors. You can walk into a patient's room and know immediately in some cases that the patient has such and such bacteria just because of the odor."

There are a variety of electronic e-nose models, all of which consist of an array of olfactory sensors that are activated in unique patterns when exposed to different aromas; software identifies each odour and its source by analyzing the patterns. (The human brain uses this same pattern-recognition process to identify smells.)

Emily Anthes *Nature* January 11, 2008 <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=electronic-noses-could-make-diseases-something-to-sniff-at>

Wearing Too Much Perfume May Indicate Depression

Depression has been linked to a biological mechanism that affects the olfactory glands. "Our scientific findings suggest that women who are depressed are also losing their sense of smell, and may overcompensate by using more perfume," explains researcher Professor Yehuda Shoenfeld, a member of the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University.

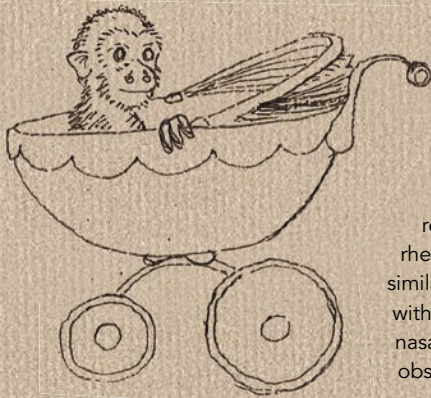
ScienceDaily January 8, 2008 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080103124645.htm>



A Bird's Eye View

Researchers think that birds can see antioxidants and choose foods containing them. Martin Schaefer of the University of Freiburg, in Germany, and his colleagues found that birds could clearly perceive the strong ultraviolet colouration given to fruit by the presence of a group of antioxidants called anthocyanins. For four days, 11 birds were given a choice between two cups of food that were identical except that the food in one was blue because it contained anthocyanins. All the birds chose the food with the anthocyanins, which confirmed that the birds could see the compound and had a preference for it.

The Economist November 29, 2007
http://www.economist.com/science/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10205178



Baby Talk

When humans talk to babies, they instinctively use a high-pitched, singsong voice. Recent research indicates that female rhesus macaques do something similar, calling out to infants with grunts and girneys, soft, nasal vocalizations. Researchers observed that female monkeys vocalized more frequently after an infant was born, and that if an

infant were to be separated from its mother, other females oriented toward the baby and increased vocalizations. The researchers suggested that the sounds do not encode specific information but, rather, are acoustically designed to attract infants' attention.

Seed Volume 13 December 2007 <http://seedmagazine.com/>

Bone, Sweet Bone...

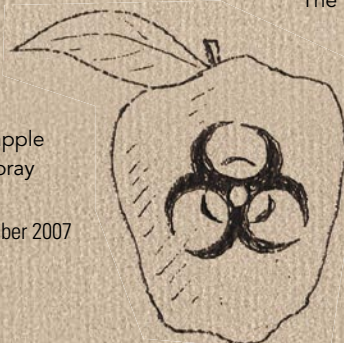
Although sweets can help weaken teeth, sugars are apparently key to making bone strong. Based on nuclear magnetic resonance imaging of horse bones, researchers concluded that polysaccharides help to guide the proper crystallization of bone minerals. A better understanding of how bone forms should alter the way osteoporosis and osteoarthritis are treated and perhaps lead to new ways of creating synthetic bone.

Scientific American January 2008 <http://www.sciam.com>

An Apple a Day ...?

Apples contain loads of fibre, vitamins and cancer-preventing antioxidants, but most of them also contain up to four pesticides – even after they've been washed. Just one apple exceeds daily recommended limits on bug-spray consumption.

Mental Floss Volume 6, Issue 6 November–December 2007
<http://www.mentalfloss.com/>



Shoot First, Ace Geometry Later

Playing an action-packed video game nearly wipes out sex differences in a basic spatial-thinking task, research has revealed. In a study of college students, men were better than women at rapidly switching their attention among stimuli displayed on a computer screen, a common test of spatial ability. But after both sexes played the role of a World War II soldier in a video game for 10 hours over several weeks, women caught up to men on the spatial-attention task, as well as on an object-rotation test of more advanced spatial ability. Women's gains persisted when the volunteers were retested an average of five months later.

The study's lead author, University of Toronto psychologist Ian Spence, speculated that the video game practice may have caused "massive overexercising" of the brain's attentional system or even switched on previously inactive genes that underlie spatial cognition.

Siri Carpenter *Scientific American Mind* Volume 18, Issue 6 December 2007. <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=shoot-first-ace-geometry>

Personal Genome Service

A personal genetics company, 23andMe, is helping individuals understand their own genetic information through the latest advances in analysis of deoxyribonucleic acid and through web-based interactive tools. The company's service will enable customers to gain deeper insights into their ancestry and other inherited traits, which are marked in an individual's genetic code.

23andMe <https://www.23andme.com>

Couch Potato Lifestyle May Speed Up Ageing

Being a couch potato in your free time could make you a decade older biologically than someone who is physically active, according to a major study of people's "chromosomal clocks".

Tim Spector at St Thomas' hospital in London, UK, and colleagues measured the lengths of telomeres – the DNA that bookends our chromosomes – in the white blood cells of 2,401 twins.

Telomeres shorten each time a cell divides, and when they become too short a cell can no longer divide, so telomeres act as a kind of timer counting down our biological age. The researchers found that people who did not exercise in their spare time had shorter telomeres than very active people.

On average, the least active (getting just 16 minutes exercise a week) had telomeres 200 base pairs shorter than the most active (exercising 3 hours a week), which translates to them being about 10 years biologically older.

The team previously showed that smoking and obesity can shorten telomere length to the equivalent of 10 years.

But they found that exercise and telomere length were linked independently of whether people smoked or were overweight.

Priya Shetty *NewScientist.com News Service* January 29, 2008 <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn13238-couch-potato-lifestyle-may-speed-up-ageing.html>

Awards & Appointments

CIHR: Extension of Term for Acting President and Appointments to Governing Council



Dr. Pierre Chartrand has accepted a request from the governor in council to continue as acting president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) until such time as a new president is appointed. A competitive process is currently under way to appoint a permanent CIHR president. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Chartrand was the vice-president of research at CIHR.

Before joining CIHR, Dr. Chartrand was the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Institute for Research in Immunology and Cancer and a full professor in the Department of Pathology and Cellular Biology in the Faculty of Medicine at Université de Montréal. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Chartrand has been a member of the board of the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ). He organized and led the FRSQ's Cancer Network, which became, under his leadership, one of the strongest networks of the FRSQ.

The governor in council has also appointed Dr. Nicole Letourneau and reappointed Dr. William (Bill) Thomlinson to Governing Council, both for three-year terms.

Dr. Letourneau is a full professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of New Brunswick and a research fellow at the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy. She holds a Canada Research Chair in Healthy Child Development. Dr. Letourneau has also been a member of the Institute Advisory Board for the Institute of Gender and Health. In 2006, Dr. Letourneau was the recipient of the Peter Loughheed/CIHR New Investigator Award: Canada's Premier Young Researcher, which is CIHR's most important career development award given to Canada's brightest young researchers at the beginning of their careers.



Dr. Thomlinson has been a member of the CIHR Governing Council since 2005. He is the executive director of the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron facility in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A globally renowned expert in synchrotron medical imaging, Dr. Thomlinson was formerly head of the Medical Research Group at the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility in Grenoble, France, where he led a highly successful medical beamline group, helped start lung and mammography imaging and led the facility's first human blood vessel imaging studies. He is also the former associate chair for environment, safety and health at the National Synchrotron Light Source, Brookhaven National Laboratory, in New York, where he created and led the successful multidiscipline Synchrotron Medical Research Facility.

BC Cancer Foundation Appoints New President and CEO

Brian Kenning, chair of the BC Cancer Foundation Board, has announced the appointment of Dr. David MacLean as president and CEO of the BC Cancer Foundation, effective May 1, 2008. Originally a family physician in rural Nova Scotia, Dr. MacLean has

a distinguished background in healthcare and academia as both a physician and researcher. He was the founding dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, has worked extensively with the World Health Organization and been a member of the boards of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of British Columbia and the Yukon and the Fraser Health Authority.

New Vice-President of Innovation at Canada Health Infoway

Canada Health Infoway has announced that, effective March 3, 2008, Dr. James R. Maclean joined the organization as vice-president of innovation and adoption. Previously, Dr. Maclean has held the positions of special advisor and executive lead for the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, where he directed the establishment of 150 interdisciplinary family health teams. He has also served in the positions of chief of staff and CEO at Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH), in Markham, Ontario. During his 13-year tenure in those roles at MSH, the hospital earned a National Quality Institute Award for excellence, making it the first healthcare institute ever honoured with this award.

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre Executive Appointments



Following an extensive national search, Dr. Keith Rose has been named the new executive vice-president, chief medical executive, at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, effective April 14, 2008. Dr. Rose comes to Sunnybrook from his most recent post as the vice-president and chief medical executive at North York General, one of Ontario's largest community

teaching hospitals. Dr. Rose has been in healthcare for more than 30 years, and he brings to Sunnybrook an impressive background of leadership accomplishments from his tenure at North York to his work at St. Michael's Hospital, where he held a number of roles including medical director of Perioperative and Critical Care, chair of the Medical Advisory Committee and chief of the Department of Anaesthesia.

Margaret Blastorah has accepted the position of director of nursing research at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Blastorah is currently completing her PhD in nursing administration at the University of Toronto, investigating the effect of mentoring on the development of leadership self-efficacy in nurses. Most recently, she was director of professional practice at the Markham Stouffville Hospital. Blastorah has a diverse professional background that includes various positions at the College of Nurses of Ontario, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Wellesley Hospital, the Toronto General Hospital and Chaim Sheba Medical Centre in Israel. She has also served as professional practice leader at St. Joseph's Health Centre.

Appointment at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance

Paul Heinrich has been appointed vice-president and chief financial officer for the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance in Ontario. Heinrich, who succeeds Rick Cooper, began his new duties March 3. Heinrich

Awards & Appointments

previously served as executive director and chief financial officer for the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary. He was also advisor to the chief clinical officer of the Calgary Health Region.

New Deputy in the Northwest Territories



Mr. Greg Cummings has been appointed to the position of deputy minister for the Department of Health and Social Services, Northwest Territories. Cummings recently served with the government of the Northwest Territories as assistant deputy minister of operational support for the Department of Health and Social Services. He also held the position of CEO at the

Yellowknife Health and Social Services Health Authority and the Tli Cho Community Services Agency. Cummings has served as the Northwest Territories board member on the Canadian Healthcare Association and is currently the Mental Health Commission of Canada's board member for the three northern territories.

Yukon Appoints Medical Officer of Health

Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers announced recently that Whitehorse physician Brendan Hanley would assume responsibility as Yukon's medical officer of health (MOH) in February. Hanley replaced Dr. Bryce Larke, who served as Yukon's MOH for seven years. Larke will temporarily remain as the Yukon's representative on several federal/provincial committees.

In addition to his most recent role as medical director of the Whitehorse General Hospital Emergency Department, Hanley has extensive experience internationally, including work with Doctors without Borders. In 2003, he obtained a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University. He has an interest in many areas of community health and has played an active role locally in injury prevention.

Newly Formed MHCC Appoints President and CEO

The Honourable Michael Kirby, chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), has announced the appointment of Michael Howlett as the president and CEO of the newly formed commission. His appointment took place February 18, 2008. Howlett was most recently president and CEO of the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA). For the past five years, he has been a champion for those affected by diabetes, working with government, the medical and research communities and business. Under his direction, the CDA experienced a dramatic turnaround. It became a financially sound and effective national organization, internationally recognized as the authority in diabetes research, education and advocacy.

Howlett's professional career spans three decades. Prior to joining CDA, he established himself as both a successful business leader and a champion of causes, who defended those who could not defend themselves.

MHCC is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention on mental health issues. It is funded by the federal

government but operates at arm's length from all levels of government. The commission's objective is to enhance the health and social outcomes for Canadians living with mental health problems and illnesses. To achieve this goal, the commission is pursuing three key initiatives: (1) leading the development of a national mental health strategy, (2) creating a 10-year campaign to reduce the widespread stigma associated with mental health problems and illnesses and (3) establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre to improve cross-sector communication about mental health and mental illness for all Canadians.

Canada Health Infoway's Alvarez Inducted into the CIPA Hall of Fame



In November, Canada Health Infoway President and CEO, Richard Alvarez, was inducted into the Canadian Information Productivity Awards (CIPA) Hall of Fame. Pictured here are (L to R) Bill Hutchison, chairman and CEO of Hutchison International Management; Richard Alvarez; and Bernard Courtois, president and CEO of the Information Technology Association of Canada.

Industry Veteran to Lead Infoway's Collaboration with Private Sector



Canada Health Infoway is pleased to announce the appointment of Laurie Rogers as national industry executive. In this position, Rogers will be working in collaboration with the private sector to accelerate the deployment of electronic health records across the country.

Previously, Rogers was a senior member of GE Healthcare's team. With his arrival at Infoway, he brings with him 25 years of experience in the information technology industry, where he worked extensively on the development of e-health solutions. Rogers served on the Board of Directors for the Information Technology Association of Canada as well as the Canadian Health Information Technology Trade Association. He also holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Western Ontario.

Anderson, Lee and MacArthur Appointed to New Roles with SIMS

Shared Information Management Services (SIMS) recently announced some changes to its senior management, effective January 2008:

- Former SIMS CIO Matthew Anderson has been promoted to executive lead of the partnership. Anderson is also senior vice-president of performance and technology for University Health Network and e-health lead for the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network. A recipient of Canada's Top 40 Under 40 award, Anderson's accomplishments in the advancement of e-health have been recognized nationally.
- Former executive director Lydia Lee has transitioned to chief information officer for the SIMS Partnership. Lee brings to the role a wealth of experience from positions held in healthcare administration and consulting focusing on strategic alliances, integrated health system planning, information management and evidence-based healthcare.
- Tracey MacArthur, the former SIMS director of community integration and the Project Management Office, has been appointed to senior managing director responsible for SIMS' operational management. MacArthur has an extensive background in e-health and management of large-scale information management initiatives in the hospital and community sectors, and brings a long-standing focus on integration across the continuum of care.

SIMS is the information management and technology partnership between 13 healthcare organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. The group spans the acute, rehabilitation, complex continuing, long-term and community care sectors. With similar values, these organizations commit to identifying, planning and implementing joint initiatives that contribute to a coordinated and integrated healthcare delivery system. For more information on SIMS, visit www.simspartners.ca.



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- Albert Einstein

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